

JERUSALEM THE GUILTY

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“It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.”
Luke 13:33

I CAN scarcely tell you under what singular feelings I am led to adopt this text. It has entered my mind, whispered in my ears, and I might almost say it has haunted my thoughts, for all the day long has it been fresh in my memory, and again and again it has recurred to me in the night watches. There is no comfort that I can extract from the meditation, and not much instruction that I can deduce from the oracular sentence.

Conscience, however, lays on me a strong constraint. Any portion from the Word of God that comes forcibly home to my own soul I am prone to accept, as it were, in trust for your sakes. So I aim to deliver unto you that which I also received. Be it void of comfort or charged with rebuke, God grant it may be owned to your profit and accepted to His praise!

“It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.” Probably this was a proverb among the Jews, which our Savior used and endorsed. For many years Jerusalem had been stained with the blood of prophets. These godly men might have lived securely in the rural districts of Judaea, and among her various towns and hamlets, and though sometimes annoyed, never exposed to violence, but so had the seat of judgment become the throne of iniquity that vengeance was reeked where justice should have ruled.

Jerusalem, the metropolis of government, the center of religion and the priests, became notorious as the scene of judicial murder and vindictive martyrdom. It had been, through a number of years, the place where one after another of God’s servants had been stoned and put to death. Our Savior seems to have felt that He was safe while in Herod’s jurisdiction, but that when He got to Jerusalem He was in imminent peril from conspirators, that there a baptism of blood awaited Him, when His life should be sacrificed, and He should become, as it were, the Prince of Martyrs, an offering of the noblest life, a shedding of the richest blood that ever was poured out on the altar at Jerusalem.

It seems strange that Jerusalem should have sunk so low as to monopolize the sin of murdering the prophets, that it should have become renowned for persecution and vindictive cruelty, a city within whose walls God’s servants might look in vain for shelter, where popular feeling and the public courts were alike against them, where summary indictment and certain conviction were sure to be their lot. “Oh! Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that stonest the prophets and killest them that are sent unto thee!” From generation to generation had they thus framed mischief and done violence, until our Lord accuses and holds them guilty of the slaughter of His servants from “the blood of righteous Abel unto that of Zacharias, the son of Barachias, whom they slew between the temple and the altar.”

What a fearful contrast this presents to the name that Jerusalem had received, and the position that had been assigned to her! Was she not called Jerusalem, the place of righteousness and of peace? Her bards had praised her in glowing sonnets as, “beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.” How did the psalmist draw lively, lovely images of her security, surrounded by mountains that served as natural fortresses to protect her, and did he not even picture the little hills that environed her as companions of the mountain on which the temple stood? “Why leap ye so, ye high hills? This is the hill which God delighteth to dwell in.” Where else did acceptable sacrifices smoke?

As for the altars of the high places, they were an abomination to the Lord. The one altar at Jerusalem God had ordained for acceptable sacrifice. Thither the tribes came up to worship. It was the meeting place and rallying point of all the families of Israel at their annual solemnities—

*“Unto her gates, with joys unknown,
Did Judah’s tribes repair;
The Son of David held His throne,
And sat in judgment there.”*

Her mountain was illustrious in history. It was on one of her pinnacles that Abraham drew the knife to slay his son, and on the spot where the plague was stayed in David’s day, when the outstretched hand of the angel was arrested at the threshing floor of Araunah, the Jebusite, was builded stone by stone the temple where God delighted to dwell. It was the source whence light went streaming through the land as from the sun, and at the same time it was the great lake into which the rivers of sacred prayer and praise constantly flowed, gleaming in their fullness.

Oh! Jerusalem, thy very name was dear to the captives as they sat mournfully down by Babylon’s streams and wept, saying, one with another, “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; if I do not remember you, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joys.” Thou seemest so fair a city, so perfect a chrysolite, thy halls seem so truly made of agate, and thy gates of carbuncle, that in thy glory we see a type of the abode of the saints of God—

*“Jerusalem, my happy home!
Name ever dear to me;
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy, and peace, and thee?”*

And has it come to this? Well, then, might the Savior, whom thou didst despise and reject, weep over thee! Jerusalem! Jerusalem! has it come to this? “Thou killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee.” Has it come to this? No marvel that thy house is left unto thee desolate, that the holy city is given up to the abomination of desolation, and is left to be trodden under foot by the Gentiles! Has it come to this? Oh! horror of horrors! what sorrows are too sad and heart-rending to follow at the heels of sin!

Look, my brethren, that same sin which once cast down Lucifer from his throne degraded him from the royalties of heaven, and doomed him to the pit that burneth with fire and brimstone forever, that same sin has plucked this pearl from the regal diadem of the King of kings, subjected it to the direst dishonor, and made it a byword in the earth. So is her beauty despoiled, so is her sacredness, and such are the wages of sin, and such the recompense of transgressions. As you think of this city of the great king converted into a place of butchery and a shamble for prophets, I would have you recollect that—

I. THE LIKE RIGHTEOUS RETRIBUTION IS STILL INFLICTED WHEREVER SIN SEEKS SHELTER UNDER THE SOLEMN SANCTIONS OF A SOUNDING PROFESSION.

Now and then we are startled. Someone who had stood foremost amongst the saints has all of a sudden excited public gaze, conspicuous as a fiend. I remember such a man. He preached the Gospel, and seemed to preach it with intense sincerity, at any rate, there was such fervor in his manner that zeal seemed to animate his heart. His words moved many, souls were converted under his ministry, souls that shall make glad the angels of God throughout eternity. He comforted the saints and many disciples were refreshed by his discourses.

But in an evil hour he turned aside. His fall was precipitate. The sink was abysmal. Of drunkards he became one of the worst, of swearers the most profane, amongst licentious the most lewd, no slave of Satan was ever more in earnest to destroy himself and to do his black master’s bidding than that same man who once ministered at the altar of God, and appeared to be a star in the right hand of Christ.

And why may not such a collapse occur to me, and why may it not occur to thee, my brother? Every man, it has well been said, has not a soul of crystal whereby other men can read his actions. Thou lookest fair, thou seemest to be a saint, yet there may be a worm in the center of thy fair plant after all. Sudden death often surprises those who appear to be in sound health, though slow disease has long been sapping the strength of their system. Be not deceived by appearances, make sure of thy salvation. Jerusalem killed the prophets. Maybe you will likewise belie your pretensions to virtue. You have heard of a woman out of whom seven devils were cast. Did you never hear of one into whom seven devils entered?

There she stands. Never woman seemed more pure, never penitent wept more sparkling tears. Like another Mary Magdalene, she washed her Savior's feet with her tears. Yes, she seems to sit at Jesus' feet and love Him with all her heart. Earnest in season and out of season, we admire her.

But the time of trial cometh—that time which testeth the metal whether it is gold or not. She gives her heart to another than her Savior. Once led astray, no lips are more defiling than hers, no feet run more swiftly in the way of the Destroyer. It happened unto her that she did in theory know the way of righteousness, but the gracefulness of her profession was not the grace of God in truth, so presently she turned aside, and she, who seemed to be a Hannah, turned out to be a Jezebel, and she who once could sing, as we thought, the grateful song of Mary, must hence forever weep a doleful *miserere*. Take care, my sister, that you be safely built upon the Rock of Ages. As Jerusalem killed the prophets, so may you. I say so because I find it in God's Word.

Have we not too often seen instances of those who were regular outward attendants upon God's house, who seemed to adorn the earthly courts and bid fair for heaven, who rejoiced continually in holy things with a full measure of assurance, and rather frowned on some of the brethren who were sometimes depressed and filled with doubt and fears—have not we seen these very church members become the victims of some darling sin, the prey of some base lust, which has driven them like bullocks to the slaughter? "There is a sin unto death." Our eyes have seen the mischief, our ears have listened to the tale, our hearts have been pained by the recital hundreds of times.

From my youth up I have felt indescribable terror when I heard of such an one who seemed to be a pillar in the church moved from his place, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present evil world." When I have heard of it, sometimes I have been ready to wail with the prophet, "Howl, fir tree, for the cedar has fallen." Those who seemed better than ourselves, more gracious, and far more gifted, have turned aside, and we have felt that it is only by a miracle of grace we have not done the same—

*"So stones hang in the air,
So sparks in ocean live;
Kept alive with death so near,
I to God the glory give."*

Jerusalem killed the prophets, and *there is that secret wickedness in the hearts of every one of us* that would have made us do the like a thousand times, that would have turned us from saints into devils, if the constraining, preserving grace of God had not defended us. Let us, then, humbly acknowledge all this, let us carefully search ourselves to see whether we be in the faith, and then let us gratefully bless that mighty hand which, having begun its gracious work, will not leave us until it has perfectly performed its purpose and fulfilled in us all the designs of love.

Looked at thus, this passage conveys a very solemn warning. How terrible must be the deathbed of a man who, after having made a profession, and perhaps preached the Gospel, has become an apostate! Can we picture the siege of Jerusalem? I believe that all human rhetoric must fail in the description, and that if a painter dipped his brush in blood he could not sketch the horrors of that awful time. If those days had not been shortened, surely the whole race had been swept away. There never was, and never

shall be until the last tremendous day, anything that can be paralleled with the destruction of Jerusalem under Vespasian and Titus.

In like manner, there is nothing, I think, that can parallel, certainly nothing that can exceed, the horrors of the dying bed of an apostate. Did you ever read the story of Francis Spira, or of John Auld, in the days of the last nonconforming reformation in England? If you ever read the stories of these deathbeds, they will ring in your ears at night, and make you cry out, "O God, if I am damned, let it not be as an apostate!" If I must perish, yet let me not perish as one who, like a dog, returns to his vomit, or like a sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. Jerusalem stoned the prophets! You young men, who are just putting on your harness, boast not as though you were putting it off.

Beginners in the way of grace, it is a great and solemn truth that every child of God will hold on until the end, but it is an equally solemn truth that many who profess to be the Lord's are self-deceivers, and will turn out apostates after all. They will go back to the beggarly elements from which they appear to have escaped, and begin to stone the prophets, whom once they professed to reverence and love. How dreadful their doom! To see the Lord when fire blazes before Him, and the clouds form a chariot beneath Him, when "He shall come, but not the same as once in lowliness he came," when He shall appear in rainbow wreath and clouds of storm, how dreadful will it be to those who turned their backs upon Him!

In vain shall they call upon the mountains and rocks to cover them, they must face Him whom they deserted, they must be arraigned before Him whom they treacherously betrayed. Oh! how they will fall in speechless, helpless, hopeless dismay before Him! and oh! how He will trample on them in His anger, because they trampled on His blood in their perfidy, and crucified to themselves the Lord of life afresh! God save us from their eternal woes, for of all bitter remorse and fell despair, theirs must be the most tormenting.

The privileges they enjoyed aggravate the perdition in which they are engulfed. Down from heaven's gates they are thrust into hell by the back door. Their faces, once towards Jerusalem the Golden, now confront the accursed Gehenna. From the rayless, pathless outlook with which they bid farewell to mortal life to the dire reality of their dreaded doom they are launched forth, "wandering stars, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever." Such are "trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots, raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame." God deliver us from their character and their conduct, lest we reap the consequence that is sure to close their career! Now to draw a fresh lesson, let me remind you of—

II. THE UTTER USELESSNESS OF OUTWARD PRIVILEGES UNLESS THERE BE INWARD PURITY.

Never was a city more richly endowed or more highly privileged than was Jerusalem of old. As we have already said, it was the city of the great king. There all the festivals were held. Her priests were her pride. The anointed ministers of the altar thronged her streets, numerous as the flowers which bedeck the meadows in spring. There you might have heard the voice of sacred song every hour in the day. Within her gates the ritual of religion was observed with almost perpetual celebrations. All that was comely, sacred, and holy seemed to have an exclusive abode within her precincts. Yet for all that these people were not a whit the better. They had a baneful monopoly that they shamefully coveted—a monopoly of killing the prophets, and of stoning those whom God sent unto them. The means of grace were evidently not blessed to them.

How plainly this shows the possibility of retaining sin, unsubdued and unchecked, notwithstanding all the righteousness that is taught in precepts, and all the grace that is exhibited in ordinances! Are there not regular attendants here who, though they mingle with the church, join in the hymns of praise, and listen to the words of exhortation, are as corrupt in their character and their conversation as if they went nowhere? Sit there not in these pews those who are as covetous, as bad tempered, and in some cases, as licentious as if they never entered a place of worship at all? For them our most earnest rebukes,

invitations, warnings, are ineffective as the roaring of the wild waves of the sea, or the ringing of bells in a church tower, they produce no sort of moral or spiritual result.

I speak solemnly of individuals, not censoriously of systems, when I affirm, without particularizing any denomination, because the same is true amongst ourselves, that I know there are thousands who go to church and believe because they have conformed more or less to religious customs, and observed the sacraments, all is well with them, whereas neither doctrine nor discipline of Christians exert the slightest influence upon their hearts or their lives. Their temper is as fiery or as morose, their greed for the world just as inordinate, their vanity and fondness of display quite as unseemly, and the petty vices of a degraded mind as freely indulged, as if they ranked themselves among the profane. They have all the outward signs of religion, but they have not a particle of vital godliness.

I remember a time when people wore rings round their fingers to cure their bones of rheumatism. It may have done them some good, though I doubt it, but that outward forms of religion can be of any avail to purge the heart or sanctify the soul I utterly disbelieve. What does it matter whether you go to church or not, whether you use a prayer book or a hymnal or not, or whether you bend your knee morning and evening or not, if these things have no effect upon you, if you walk after the flesh, and not after the Spirit? You may as well leave off these religious fashions, though it may seem rather bold to say so. I would rather you put off every sham, because then you would know where and what you are. Religious pretence only deceives others and befools yourselves.

We always talk about this as a Christian country. We are wrong. It is not a Christian, it is a heathen country. There are some Christians in it, thank God, but the country is not a Christian country. The Metropolis is not Christian. London herself is a heathen city. Vice and violence, lewdness and licentiousness, are as ripe in her as they are in Paris or Vienna, Calcutta or Bombay. You need not go far afield, take the nearest court, or the blind alley that leads out of the main street, or go into some of the great houses at the West End, and you will see in them such awful abominations as might convince you that their frequenters say, in their heart, there is no God, or if they worshipped a deity, it was Buddha or Vishnu.

Count the churches, count the chapels, take account of the mission stations, sum up all the outward privileges, and mark the condition. In the teeth of them all, we may say sin is growing more rampant. The more religion the more sin, if it be a religion of outward rites, without the power of godliness. Jerusalem was the worst of cities, and yet the most religious. It was the most profane because it was the most sanctimonious, its piety being a mere empty profession. In no other city was there so much lip-service, cringing, and bowing. In offering oblations and burning incense, she was pre-eminent. Still no other city had such a renown for stoning the prophets. And it may be that your real character may be as little in keeping with your pretensions.

You may have prayers every morning, and Bible readings every day, you may resort to sacraments, practice genuflections, observe festivals, and make pilgrimages, all to no purpose. Your seeming sanctity may be only a mask, covering up folly and vice. The balance is on the wrong side. Your creed has aggravated your crimes. Your religion has precipitated your ruin. The tagraggery of vestments and ceremonials are but the histrionics of religion, in which amateurs delight. All their mystery and pomp are mere stage play. No benefit whatever can you derive from such principles or such performances. All the trust you put in them must entail miserable disappointments, it may involve you in desperate consequences, no falsehood can be harmless, self-deception must be pernicious.

Lend me your eyes, and I will show you the worst man in Jerusalem. What! do you think that I am going to point out that tax-gatherer? By no means. He is a scoundrel, I admit. He exacted three times as much as he ought of that poor widow, and drained her resources. No doubt he is a real bad fellow, but I know a worse.

Go knock at the door of yon affluent rabbi, you cannot be admitted just yet. Ask the servant where his master is. He will tell you that he is at prayers, he will not be at liberty for three-quarters of an hour at least. You must wait, I suppose, until this gentleman has finished his devotions. After a while he

condescends to put in an appearance. You look at him with surprise. Whatever is that remarkable feature on his forehead? You might fancy he must have fallen down and bruised himself and put a piece of plaster on his forehead. Oh! no, that little box on his frontal is inscribed with texts of Scripture. A Bible precept supplies him with a bold pretext. "Thou shalt bind them for a frontal between thine eyes." So, like a fool, taking the sound and leaving the sense, he has inserted a series of texts into a box and tied it on to his scalp.

And oh! what a deep fringe he has to his dress! It is half as long as his robe. What is that for? Because he is told to have a border to his garment, and so he has it broad, half an inch would have done, but he has it seven inches at least. He cannot do anything in moderation as it should be done. He must carry everything to an extreme. If you wish to speak to this gentleman, you find he really cannot attend to you, because he is just going up to the temple, he has a little account to pay there. He shows it to you. Of course, he says he likes to show it. You can see how precise he is. It is a farthing, and an eighth part of it is for mint he has been using. He is very careful about tiny matters. Before he goes to pay that, he tells the servant to mind and strain out all the gnats, lest he should swallow any unclean animal when he drinks his wine.

Follow him up to the temple, and you will observe him standing by himself. He is saying, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." It is rude, perhaps, to pry into his private doings, but as he is gone out, just let us take a look into this little sanctum and see his accounts. We begin to look at them—and we must be quick, for fear he should come and catch us. Look at this entry, "Half a dozen widows' houses devoured last week." Go on, and you will see all sorts of bad things that he has been doing.

He would not have been such an atrocious villain had it not been for his religion. He wraps that about him as a cloak, and it prevents his seeing what a great sinner he is. Perhaps if he did not practice so much piety, he might be shocked at his lack of morality. As Jesus said to the Pharisees, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say we see; therefore, your sin remaineth."

This man pretends to be a saint, but he proves to be a devil. His soaring profession aggravates his heartless infamy. Surely, I think, this example falls fairly within the scope of my text. Jerusalem, as a locality the center of devoutness, became the cesspool of corruption. If you have the cherubim without the Shekinah, if you have the sacred symbols without the sanctifying Spirit, if you have the sound creed without the lively faith, if you have Gospel in the pulpit without grace in the heart, if you have Protestant Christianity without a precious Christ, then the decadence of your religion will lead to the demoralizing of your character.

The mere possession of the outward means of grace may have no better effect than that of making men worse, yet it entails a very solemn responsibility. No man can sin after he has received light from above, so cheaply as he does who commits his transgressions in the dark. When you are warned, and entreated, and besought to turn from the error of your way, should you still pursue it? "Being often warned, and hardening your neck," the sentence is, "you shall be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy."

I believe some hyper-Calvinists raise an objection to the responsibility of man whilst hearing the Gospel, and there are several other things to which they likewise demur, but I hope we shall always accept the testimony of God's Word without distorting it, whether it is agreeable or distasteful to us. As for me, I have braved the sneer of men because I feared the frown of my Lord. But now they are dead that troubled me, and it is not likely that I shall cease to speak of unbelief as other than a grievous sin, a capital crime, and an aggravation of all other transgressions.

The Gospel is either a savor of life unto life, or of death unto death, to every one of you who hears it. If it be not a stone of help, it will become a stone of stumbling. You will either fall upon it and be broken, or it will fall upon you and grind you to powder. Beware, ye that hear the Gospel and trifle with it, lest it be said unto you, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish."

I believe that throughout eternity the punishment of the guilty will be aggravated forever by the privileges against which they have persisted in sinning. To sink into perdition from under the shadow of

the Gospel is possible, to go down with warnings of judgment and wooing of mercy sounding in one's ears is suicidal, to leap into the pit headlong, and to find out the deepest depths of dire despair is dreadful beyond description. To think of it conjures up thoughts from which we recoil.

Oh! call it not a fatal mistake, for it is a foul crime. The heathen, who never heard of Christ, cannot accuse themselves of having wasted Sabbaths and rejected a Savior. But Sabbath after Sabbath you who have had the Gospel delivered in your hearing—ye will have to bear a reproach like this, “Ye knew the Gospel, but loved it not!” This shall be the perpetual worm that shall never die.

There was a time when God called. He himself says it, “I called, but ye refused; I stretched out my hand, and no man regarded it; therefore, I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh.” In like manner Jesus says, “Woe unto thee, Chorazin; woe unto thee, Bethsaida; it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for you.” The privilege in each instance clenches the responsibility. Oh! may this solemn truth abide with each of us! Now let me, in closing, give a slightly different tone to our meditation. We have seen that Jerusalem had a monopoly of one sin—she killed the prophets.

III. THERE ARE SINS WHICH GOD'S PEOPLE, HIS REAL PEOPLE, TRUE AND GENUINE SAINTS, MAY BE CHARGED WITH—nay, of which they may accuse themselves, as exclusively their own.

Possibly the very mention of them may lead us to repent, and bring us back again humbly and penitently to the foot of the cross, that we may accept with the more gratitude the full atonement which our Savior made. You and I are, dear friends, the children of God in a sense in which other men are not, we are part of His great family. Being regenerated and adopted, we have received the nature of children, and been put into their *status*.

Other men are but subjects under His law, we are sons. No servant can sin as a son can. A servant and a son may both be guilty of the same offense, but there is a difference in the degree of guilt because of the relationship. A father may well say, “My servant ought not to have done this—he has offended me, but as for you, my own child, my beloved, you have grieved me to my heart, for you have sinned against a father's love, as well as against a father's authority. You are bound to me by ties so close that you ought to have been more scrupulous. I can understand a servant injuring my property or my reputation, but to my child both of these should be very dear.”

There seems to me to be a baseness about the ingratitude of a child with which the unkindness of a friend will not compare. Sharper than an adder's tooth is the conduct of a thankless child, because he is a child. I do not think it is possible for anyone not related to break and wound a mother's heart as her own child can. You Christians can easily apply this reflection to yourselves. There is a peculiar wickedness about your sin. In the judgment of others it is the same, but in your own judgment, if you think of your heavenly Father and your nearness to Him, it will seem to be far worse.

Dear friend, remember you are not only a child, but sometimes you rejoice to think that you are Christ's spouse. Now, one's spouse lies very near one's heart. Another person may say something against me, and I might pass it over. A remark which, coming from a stranger, or even from a friend, we might slight, but did it come from one's own spouse, it would cut deep into the very soul. You would say, “It was not an enemy, then I could have borne it, but it was thou—thou who dost rest in my bosom and enjoyest my perfect confidence—you have lifted up thy heel against me.”

Say, then, child of God, dost thou not see that thy sins may have a peculiar heinousness about them? There may be a stoning of prophets, and a crucifying of Christ in thy misdeeds, although still favored as a bride, never to be divorced, thy crime is bitter, and to be repented of bitterly.

There is one sin which has often oppressed my heart, and I dare say it has yours. *We grow cold in love to our Savior*. Some of you do not love your Savior with the same warmth and devotedness you did at first. There may be those among you who plead not guilty. I wish most of you could, but alas! how many of you have to look back upon former days and say, “O that it were with me as in the days that art past!” More cause you have for loving Him, more coals have been put on the fire, but yet it is less hot,

and burns less brightly, more stones have been thrown on the cairn, and yet it is smaller than it was at first. Oh! strange it is—we sometimes even almost wonder to see it—that some who since they first came to Christ, and rested only on Him, have had many gifts and graces vouchsafed to them, have almost put them in the place of Him who gave them.

Master Brookes says, “Suppose a loving husband were to hang his wife’s ears with earrings, and put jewels about her neck, and rings upon her fingers, and she got so fond of all these pretty things that she forgot her husband, it would be a sad thing if love tokens should make us forget the hand that gave them.”

This case is just like ours, we begin looking at our own good works and graces, and get to be so pleased that we forget from whom they proceed, and look upon them as our own, whereas there is no luster in them except that which is reflected, and we shall soon lose even the reflection if we get contented with them. We must look to Christ, and Him alone. Shame on us all Christians that we should be thus remiss and negligent of our deepest, tenderest obligations. This is a vice to which even the heathen are not prone.

Do you ever hear of a nation forsaking its gods? Well might the prophet expostulate, since no other nation forsook its gods, yet Israel forsook hers. Worldly men do not forsake their pursuits with the indifference that you forsake yours. They grow more and more enamored of the flaunting charms of that woman Jezebel, the world, whilst our hearts, alas! are often forgetful of our fair, infinitely fair Lord Jesus, and go rambling abroad with some other love. This is a sin which none but Christians commit.

And what shall I say of the *doubts we cast upon the faithfulness of God*, after having proved it so conspicuously? No unconverted person can have proved it as we have done. There are promises of which anyone, especially the stranger within our gates, might have availed himself. The world, however, discredits sheer worth. But some of you have gone to the throne of grace with pleas based on promises not once only, peradventure, if I should say you have gone hundreds and thousands of times, I should not exceed the number of proofs you have made of the divine faithfulness.

Fifty years have transpired since some of you came to the Lord, and you never found Him slack. He never dishonored His own word, He has been faithful and true in the midst of all that was fleeting and transient. Yet your heart flutters and your lips murmur when a fresh trial arises. How canst thou be so distrustful, so provoking?

Airy says, “If there be a God, if prayer can prevail, if there is any kind of piety that is not a baseless presumption, are moot questions with the men of this generation,” but you know there is a God, you know He hears prayer, you know He honors obedience, and fulfils every tittle He has spoken. Why should you ever harbor a doubt, or cherish a misgiving? Is it not monstrous? Doubt now? What fresh pledge, what further guarantee, can you require? Do strive earnestly, do pray constantly that this accursed unbelief may be cast out of you. Are you not heirs of heaven? Are you not looking for and hasting unto the coming of the Son of God? Shall your faith be steadfast as to the goal, and yet in suspense as to the journey?

With such seed thoughts have I ruminated on my text, “*It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.*” Jerusalem! thy name suggests to me all that is beautiful for situation, and all that is precious for privileges, and yet I tremble at thy history, for it is a record of mischief and misery. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! rather had I sung thy praise than rehearsed thy crimes! But O God! let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be alike acceptable to Thee! May such warnings be fruitful as any wooing in drawing reluctant hearts to right allegiance. This is my last word—Believe and live. Amen.

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